

68 E-Commerce and Shopping Carts for the Small Business

 smallbiztrends.com/2010/06/ecommerce-shopping-carts-small-business.html

Making it easy for your customer to buy from you is a mantra most online retailers know well. Just as important for many small business owners is finding an e-commerce solution that is easy for you to set up and to run that e-commerce storefront.

Reminder: *Many of the top web hosting companies offer e-commerce tools and storefronts, so before you switch it is worth taking a look at your existing host's capabilities.*

More than any other category that I've worked on so far, there were so many e-commerce or shopping cart companies offering solutions it was tough to organize. I tried to triangulate on the best known or popular (by comments I've read or ratings) services and list the top three in a category. Also, I've left a fair number off this list mostly because they either didn't look to be keeping up with the marketplace or they didn't make pricing easy to find. But if you have a favorite that you want to tell us about, please share the company and website with everyone in the comments.



Let me start with the easiest and best known mechanisms to enable e-commerce by many small businesses: **Paypal**, **Google Checkout**, and **Amazon Checkout** all let you add Buy Now buttons to your site and enable a purchase of both physical and digital goods. There are people building their own electronic stores using these one of these tools and the main reason is they are well known trusted brands. A person with a Paypal account (or Google or Amazon) does not have to share his or her info with you directly, but just log on to their own accounts and send you a payment.

UPDATED: July 15, 2011: 19 Additional Ecommerce and Online Shopping Carts have been added to the original list of 49, making a total of 68 solutions, listed below:

Mobile is hot and these three providers can help you accept mobile payments.

Square is the elegant Apple-like solution today. It's free, including shipping. Transparent and clear pricing of 2.75% per swipe.

Intuit GoPayment has a free plan with 2.7% and then a paid plan starting at \$12.95/mo with 1.7% per swipe.

mShopper is really a mobile platform that lets you run a storefront for your mobile customers. It includes mobile marketing options as well. Starts at \$99/month with a 30-day free trial.

Facebook options abound. You can't go far today without reading about some new tab application (the term "tab" was in use when the navigation was tab-like across the top of your Facebook page). These four can help you sell more products and services.

ShopTab is only \$10/mo and lets you bring your existing online storefront products into your Facebook page.

Payment is one of those applications that is in a "too good to be true" phase — but it's good. They have a free public beta that they promise will remain free for life if you sign up now.

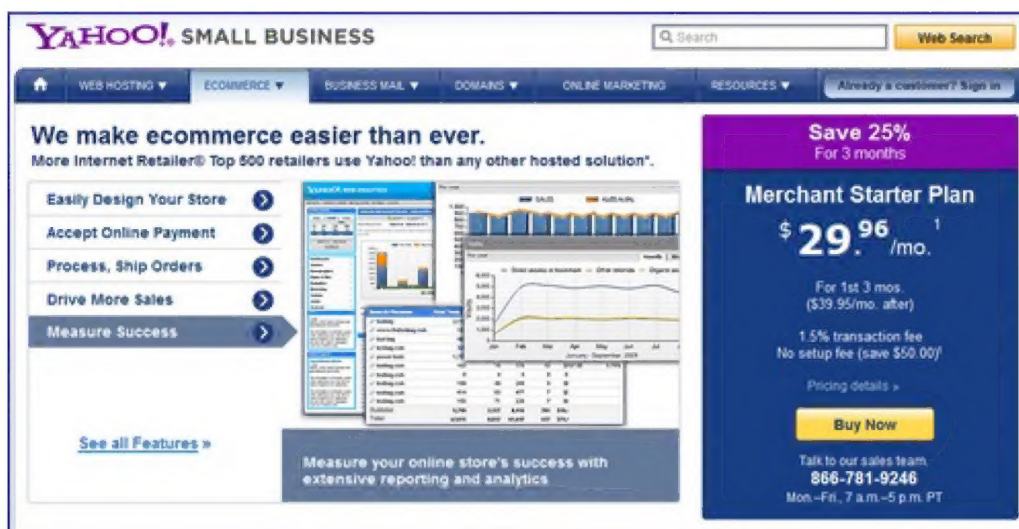
[Ecwid](#) is a fully functional shopping cart with a Facebook component that came recommended to me by Facebook expert, [Mari Smith](#) (along with the other three Facebook solutions here). It also has a forever free plan, then upgrades start at \$17/mo.

[TabJuice](#) is a complete Facebook storefront. They were one of the early ones to start talking about “social commerce” as the future. It is a robust solution that allows you to open a Facebook store, for free. No fees, no commissions for a customizable storefront.

Here are 13 more ecommerce applications that are worth a look. Many of these came from your comments on the last version of this post. Thank you for sharing your ideas and recommendations. I appreciate it.

[Vendio](#) is shaking up the market. They have a forever free plan, then start at \$19.95. They let you create a store and then sell on eBay, Amazon, and Facebook.

[Miva Merchant](#) is well known and has many positive reviews. Their full ecommerce and hosting solution starts at \$49.95 a month.



The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Small Business website. The header includes the Yahoo! logo, "SMALL BUSINESS", a search bar, and navigation links for Web Hosting, Ecommerce, Business Mail, Domains, Online Marketing, and Resources. A "Sign in" link is also present for existing customers. The main content area features a headline "We make ecommerce easier than ever." followed by a sub-headline "More Internet Retailer® Top 500 retailers use Yahoo! than any other hosted solution*." Below this, there are five key features listed with arrows: "Easily Design Your Store", "Accept Online Payment", "Process, Ship Orders", "Drive More Sales", and "Measure Success". A central graphic displays various analytics charts and a table of sales data. To the right, a prominent purple and blue box advertises the "Merchant Starter Plan" with a "Save 25% For 3 months" offer. The price is listed as "\$29.96 /mo." for the first 3 months, then "\$39.95/mo. after". It also mentions a "1.5% transaction fee" and "No setup fee (save \$50.00)". A "Buy Now" button is visible, along with contact information for the sales team: "866-781-9246" and "Mon.-Fri., 7 a.m.-5 p.m. PT".

[Yahoo Merchant Solutions](#). You can't go very far without running into a Yahoo storefront. They are one of the best known brands on the web and offer a rock solid solution. Starts at \$29.96/mo.

[Core Commerce](#) offers a free trial, then starts at \$19.99/mo. They have social networking aspects and integrate easily with Quickbooks.

[ProStores](#) is an eBay company, but you don't have to have an eBay store. But if you are thinking about an eBay store, this is an obviously good choice. Plans start at \$29.95/mo.

[AmeriCommerce](#) is great if you have plans to run several online storefronts. You can manage them all from one dashboard. Starts at \$24.95/mo.

[Network Solutions](#) is well known as a hosting company, but they have many helpful and valuable products for the small biz owner. Their ecommerce package starts at \$29.95/mo. I also tried their .mobi mobile site offer recently and liked how easy and fast it was to set up.

[ShopSmith](#) is the only software on this updated list that is download-only and run on your own server. It isn't web-based. It is a one time fee of \$797 that includes one year of support. I like that they have [Shipwire](#) on their partner list so you can outsource your shipping.

[Vendder](#) has a free plan that's tough to beat, then starts at \$24/mo. I really like that you can easily embed the

storefront right into your blog.

I found the following four shopping carts where I host some of my own sites, Bluehost. You can get them in many other webhosts as well.

[ShopSite](#) lets you download or go monthly starting at \$9/mo. If you get it from a webhosting partner, it is usually a very easy install.

[TomatoCart](#) has to win points for an innovative and fun name. Plus, they are open source. It's free. But you can buy very cool premium shopping cart themes from Tomthemes.com.

[Marketecture](#) is a website builder with an ecommerce package that sells for \$39.95/mo.

END OF NEW ADDITIONS. 49 More Terrific Ecommerce Solutions Below.

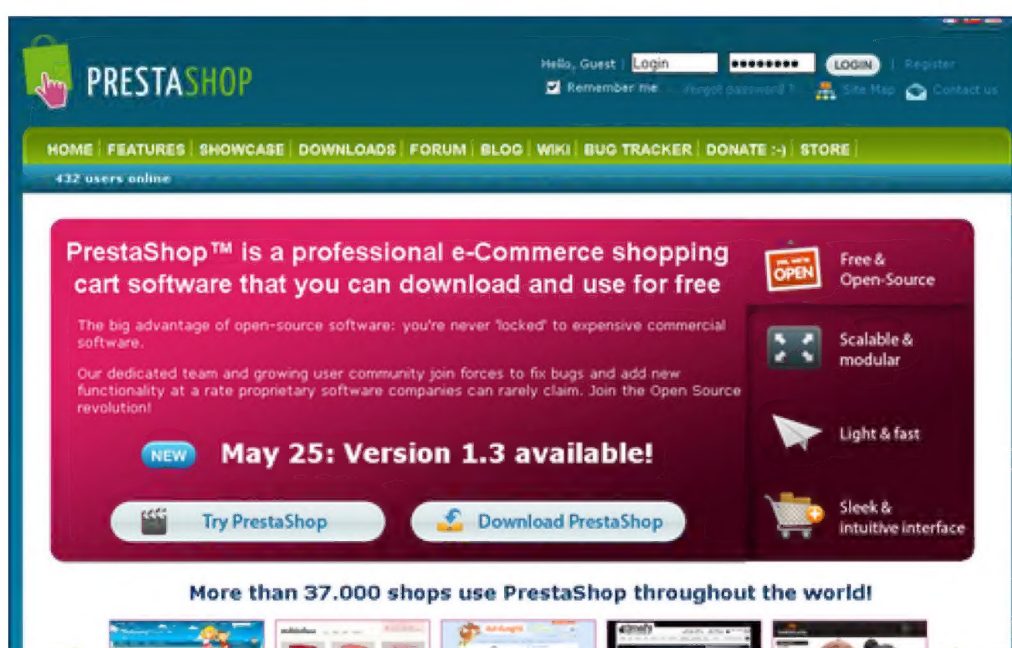
Open Source

Free appeals to just about all of us and open source e-commerce solutions can give you just that. But it comes at a price, you need to hire someone or be more technical yourself. Most open source solutions also have premium versions that include support and service.

[Magento](#) is one of the market leading open source e-commerce solutions and has won many awards. The community edition is free (which means there is no support) and the professional level starts at \$2,995 per year.

[osCommerce](#) has built an impressive customer base of 230,000+ online storefronts. They have a strong community and Live Shops directory where you can see what others have built.

[Prestashop](#) is a rapidly growing open source solution with an active user community. They have a good site with good demos and feature explanations. They have a bug tracking tool that shows they are responsive to customer input.



[Zen Cart](#) promises a very easy user-friendly install. Often open source is viewed as more difficult for the end user, but not according to Zen as they explain anyone with basic website building skills can do it.

Open Cart as the name implies offers an open solution. It sounded like one of the easiest to install, out of the box. But, there is no box. They offered some great features like search engine optimization (SEO), auto image resizing, unlimited products and more.

Spree Commerce is an open source flexible commerce platform built on the Ruby on Rails programming language. Completely free to use.

SimpleCart(js) is an elegant open source solution. If you can write basic HTML, they promise this lightweight (in terms of program size of only 20k) app is for you.

Blogging Platform (CMS) Storefronts

Since many small businesses run their sites on popular open source CMS's (content management systems), I've included the top three: WordPress, Drupal and Joomla and all offer free plugins or add-ons to create online catalogs and storefronts.

Ubercart and **Lite Commerce** for Drupal

VirtueMart for Joomla

These next five e-commerce options just for WordPress, one of the most popular and user-friendly blog platforms. As an aside with no affiliate link, I heartily recommend **Thesis for WordPress** for a robust theme and blog design management tool.

Premium Hosted and Standalone E-commerce and Shopping Cart providers

BigCommerce is one of the top hosted e-commerce and shopping cart players. They were one of the first to offer social commerce tools (selling via Facebook, for example) and have a well laid out site. 15 day free trial, then starts at \$24.95/month.



Volusion is also one of the top hosted e-commerce players on the market today with over 100,000 customers. Their plans start at \$19 per month with a 14-day free trial, no credit card required. They have a really cool VZoom feature that lets a user zoom in and around your product image. Plus, you can connect to your store to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Infusionsoft is regarded as an email marketing 2.0 leader, but they also offer a robust shopping cart and e-commerce solution bundled into their software-as-a-service. Of course, you can integrate all that customer data,

your email marketing, and your customer's purchases into one dashboard, too, so it is pretty powerful. It is best for small businesses that have a solid revenue stream to afford the \$299/month.

Shopify has been in our [small business contest](#) listing for a long time with their \$100,000 prize offering (ending June 2010). They have a 30-day free trial, then starting packages at \$24/month. They do a nice job of showcasing how they are an easy-to-use e-commerce provider.

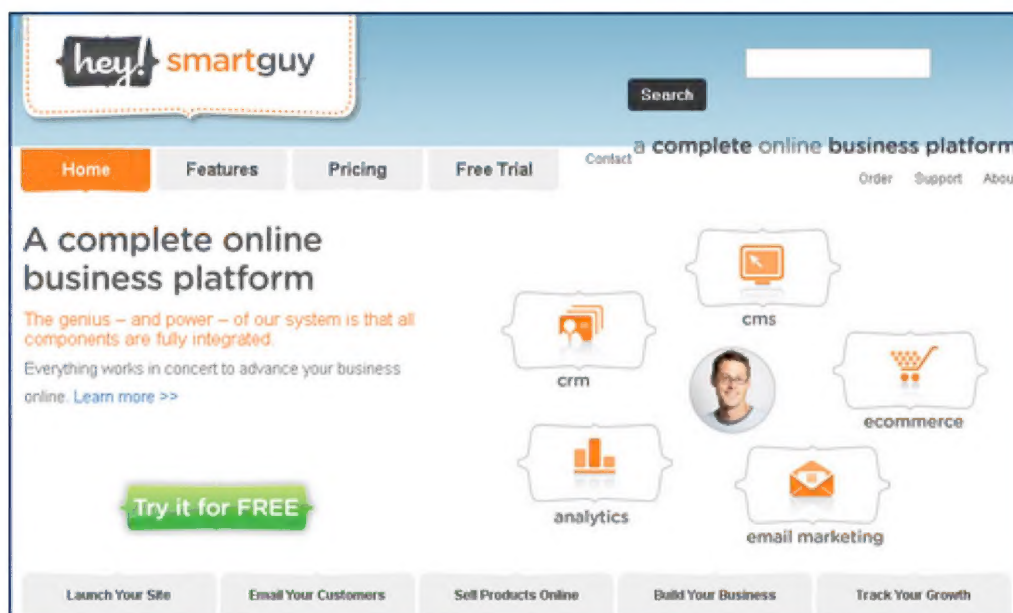
3d Cart offers a free trial with no credit card required. They also have 80 payment gateways supported (Paypal, Amazon, etc) which makes it pretty easy to make a switch if you're using someone else. Plans start at \$19.99/month and go up in smaller increments than others.

NetSuite is a powerful system that includes e-commerce, but is much more of a complete business suite of software from ERP to CRM to Inventory control to a Financial System. One of the more robust options listed here. No pricing available.

FoxyCart is built by web designers for web designers, according to their website. While you must be more techy, they appear to be feature rich and robust. The service is free while you are in development, then \$19/month.

ShopVisible stands out because of their many integrations to companies like eBay, Craigslist, Overstock and many others. No pricing available.

Hey Smart Guy is a pretty sharp company with ecommerce, CRM, and content management system starting at only \$39/month.



CS Cart is a standalone shopping cart solution that sells for \$285 for a site license. They offer a 60-day free trial, however. From dozens of included templates (or design skins) to one-page checkout, this software offers many features.

Fortune 3 is a hosted e-commerce solution with a 30-day free trial and plans starting at \$29.95/month. Like others, they are SEO-friendly and offer many designs/templates for the new user.

Avactis is a fully hosted e-commerce player with a unique difference: They allow developers to white label their solution as their own. This means you can sell your own e-commerce offering, if you choose. They offer the standard feature-rich list of shopping cart functionality starting at \$19.95/month. They also have an open source free version.

X Cart is a standalone application built in PHP. They offer a more traditional pricing structure which starts at \$115 as a one-time fee, but you can add support “points” and other options to make it fit your needs (at a higher cost). 30-day money back guarantee.

Instant e-Store offers a fixed price of \$49.97 per month with discounts for longer subscription. One of the features that stood out for me was they offered a loyalty points program so your customers could redeem earned points (by way of purchases) for other merchandise.

Cube Cart differs from many other carts in that they are hosted, not open source, but offer a free unlimited trial. The paid license comes with a bunch more features, but you could run a store on the free version for quite a while.

CRE Loaded is more than your average shopping cart because it is fully compliant with all Payment Card Industry (PCI) security rules. It starts as low as \$10/month with a free trial.

Zeus Cart is an open source e-commerce solution, however, you can't download it without entering your email and contact information. It looks incredibly rich in features and easy to use. It may be that you need to use their other services like SEO to get it for free.

Interspire offers a separate shopping cart for purchase for those who want to own their software. BigCommerce is their Hosted solution.

SunShop is a turnkey, search engine friendly shopping cart. A basic site license starts at \$249 and climbs to \$549 for what they call “owned” which gets you lifetime upgrades. They had a cool iPhone app that lets you view reports and orders.

SquirrelCart starts at \$129 for the Acorn version (light) and goes up to \$289 for the Pro version. You can then customize a theme for an affordable \$105 or buy various add-ons, if you need them.

ShopFactory looks and feels like it is as simple to set up as a blog. It is a hosted solution at \$19.95/month or you can also purchase outright for \$499.

ViArt Shop offers a free trial and hosted solution at \$49/month, but you can also purchase a light version for \$149. They had a fair number of customers highlighted on their site and I found myself wandering around from store to store checking out the many features.

Pinnacle Cart is a combination of a shopping cart and website builder application. The home page talks about it being “built from a marketing perspective” which appeals to me because the biggest challenge for most sites and stores is traffic. So it looks ideal for web-based businesses. Starts at \$25/month with a free trial.

Wix is a flash-based free website builder that has an upgrade e-commerce option. They promise that no tech skills are necessary. Starts at \$4.95/month for just the website portion, but with e-commerce it is \$19.90/month.

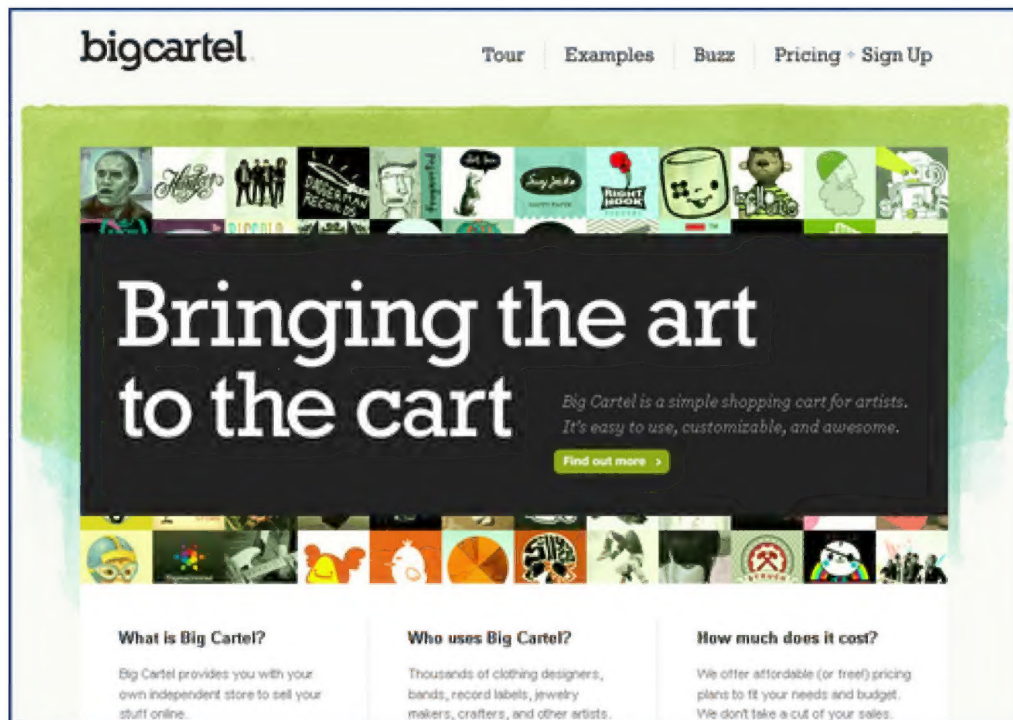
OXID looks very much like a corporate, professional e-commerce solution. The site appears to be aimed at the Fortune 500, but then you see that it offers a community open source version! It starts at over \$4,000 for the professional version.

Live Cart is one of the other e-commerce solutions that offered a private label option (see above) that starts at \$149, but they also offer a community level for free. I like that their testimonials were tied to real people with real sites.

DPD stands for Digital Product Delivery and if you sell downloads of any type, this service is worth looking at. Flat pricing starts at only \$5.

Just for Artists:

Big Cartel offers a great and simple and fast option for the artist community. Smart niche approach. What's amazing is they have a completely free option (small store, but free) and then plans start at only \$9.99/month.



Just for Photographers or Designers:

PhotoStore is the market leader for photographers wanting their own photo store or if you are looking to build a stock photo service. They have a feature rich software solution for \$249 for a site license.

CMS Account offers a PHP-based Photo Store Script that you can load onto your webserver/host and run your own media files store. Starts at \$99.

Xpoze is a newly launched stock photo storefront solution. Pricing is from \$90 to \$225 per licence.

Let us know what you think of these solutions and if you have any great success stories, please share them with me by email or via Twitter.